

INST 381: Research Methods for International Studies

TR 4:00–5:15

Croft 202

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Office Hours: MW 9:00-12:00

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COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS

This is a research methods course designed specifically for Croft students. The focus on the course is on preparing you to work on a yearlong thesis project. Additionally, we will cover a range of methods applicable to research projects in each of the Croft thematic concentrations. This includes both qualitative and quantitative research methods and techniques. Throughout the semester, we will develop a working understanding of the fundamentals of social scientific thinking and how to apply them to a research project.

This is a “workshop seminar” course. That means that we will consistently work throughout the semester to prepare a final product: a research proposal. A research proposal (or prospectus) is an integral part of any research thesis project. It lays out the research question, the basic theoretical framework, and the research design to be used in the larger thesis. Later, a modified version of the proposal becomes the first chapter of the final thesis.

Additionally, you will get a chance to practice a range of research methods and techniques. While you may not master all of them, you should become comfortable enough with them to be able to use them in your Croft thesis project.

COURSE TEXTS

The following books are required for this course:

Berg, Bruce L. and Howard Lune. *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*, 8th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2011.

Gerring, John. *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Kellstedt, Paul and Guy Whitten. *The Fundamentals of Political Science Research*, 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Below is a summary of the course requirements and their percentage of the final grade:

	Points	% of grade
Thesis proposal	150	30
Proposal (presentation)	50	10
Brief research presentations (x3)	75	15
Participation	50	10
Peer reviews (x2)	50	10
Written assignments (x5)	125	25
Total	500	

Participation

Active participation in class is an essential part of learning, particularly in advanced level courses. Participation in this course is worth 10% of the semester grade. This will be based on my subjective evaluation of your performance. To earn a high participation grade, you not only need to regularly attend class, but also ask questions, make comments, and actively engage in our discussions.

In methods courses, engaged participation is essential. We will cover a wide range of methodological issues, concepts, and techniques. And we will move through them rapidly. If you don't understand something, ask. Asking questions is not a sign of a bad student—it is a sign of a confident, curious, and engaged student.

Thesis Proposal and Related Components

The chief purpose of this course is to prepare students to write a Croft senior thesis. Although this course is structured as a survey of different qualitative and quantitative research methods and strategies, you should constantly engage with the course materials with your own future (or current) Croft thesis project in mind.

Thesis Proposal. The largest single component of your grade (worth 30%) is the thesis proposal. This is a different kind of paper than the ones you are probably familiar with. The model we will use is the Croft thesis proposal. Ideally, you should be able to use the final product in this class as your thesis proposal.

The thesis proposal is a relatively detailed statement of and justification of your research question and a discussion of your research design. This includes case selection (whether a single-case study or a large-N statistical analysis) and a description of your data collection and analysis techniques.

Specific guidelines are attached separately. But note that one of your assignments is a **preliminary research statement**, due on September 5 (Thursday). The final proposal is due the Monday of final exams week. Also note that a **draft proposal** is due November 21 (before the Thanksgiving break). Failure to turn in a draft proposal on November 21 will result in an automatic 15 point deduction from the final thesis proposal grade.

Proposal Presentation. In addition to your written research proposal, you will also work on a formal proposal presentation (worth 10% of your semester grade). The model we will use is the Croft Thesis Writers' Conference presentation. Ideally, you should be able to use the proposal presentation you develop in this class as your Thesis Writers' Conference presentation.

Specific guidelines are attached separately. But note that this presentation will serve in lieu of a final exam and will be presented during that time.

Peer Reviews. In addition to your own written proposal work, you will be responsible for writing two (one page) peer reviews of other students' research proposal drafts. The purpose of the peer review is to give you a chance to help two of your colleagues refine their research question and research design as they move forward to their final draft. Two of your colleagues will do the same for you.

I will provide specific guidelines for your peer review later in the semester. Peer reviews will be due December 3 (the week we return from the Thanksgiving break). I will expect you to incorporate and/or address your peer reviewers' comments in your final thesis proposal.

Written Assignments

There are five different written assignments this semester. Each is tied to your understanding of research methods and its relationship to a final thesis project. The five assignments include:

- 1) A ***preliminary research statement*** (two paragraphs), in which you outline a research question and provide a rationale for its importance. This research question will serve as the central question you will pursue throughout the semester in all other assignments. So think about this carefully. You can later revise it, but only in consultation with me.
- 2) A completed ***IRB approval form*** that you could submit to the university's Institutional Review Board office.
- 3) A ***qualitative analysis statement*** (2-3 pages), in which you outline how you would use at least one of the "qualitative" methods introduced this semester to answer your research question.
- 4) A ***quantitative analysis statement*** (2-3 pages), in which you outline how you could use at least one the quantitative/statistical methods introduced this semester to answer your research question.
- 5) A ***case selection statement*** (2-3 pages), in which you outline and justify the case selection you plan to use to answer your research question.

I will provide specific guidelines for each assignment later in the semester. You should work on each of these in consultation with me (preferably during office hours). Each written assignment is worth 5% of the semester grade.

Brief Research Presentations

Each of you will give three brief (5-7 minutes) research presentations. The purpose of these brief presentations is to give you a chance to practice giving a formal research presentation prior to your thesis proposal presentation, but also to give you a chance to demonstrate your ability to use some of the research methods we cover in the course. These short projects DO NOT need to be related to your research question (but they can, if you want them to). The three presentations include:

- 1) A ***qualitative research presentation***, in which you present the findings of a short research assignment using at least one of the methods introduced during the "qualitative" methods sequence.
- 2) A ***quantitative research presentation***, in which you present the findings of a short research assignment using at least one of the statistical methods introduced during the "quantitative" methods sequence.
- 3) A ***case study presentation***, in which you present a justification for using one or more cases in a case study research design.

I will provide specific guidelines for each assignment later in the semester. You should work on each of these in consultation with me (preferably during office hours). Each research presentation is worth 5% of the semester grade.

GRADING SCALE

This course uses the university's new +/- grading scale. The corresponding percentages and point scores for each +/- letter grade are outlined below:

Letter Grade	Percentage	Points
A	93-100	465-500
A-	90-92	450-464
B+	87-89	435-449
B	83-86	415-434
B-	80-82	400-414
C+	77-79	385-399
C	73-76	365-384
C-	70-72	350-364
D	60-69	300-349
F	0-59	0-299

ADDITIONAL ISSUES & CLASS RULES

Please be sure you follow these basic class rules and policies throughout the semester:

Classroom Behavior. I do not allow the use of cell phones, laptops, or other electronic devices in class without permission. I also expect you to consistently behave in ways that demonstrate your respect for me and the course, your fellow students, and yourself.

Missing Assignments. If you prepare for contingencies (by not starting to work on assignments the night before), you should not miss any assignments. Even if your work is incomplete, submitting what you have accomplished prior to any unexpected emergency is better than earning a zero. Extensions will only be granted for extreme circumstances, and at my discretion.

Communication. Email is the most common way for students and faculty to communicate outside of class. I try to answer messages promptly, but do not expect emails sent *after 6pm* to be answered until *after 8 am* the following day. Additionally, remember to keep messages professional and respectful (e.g. use salutations, such as "Professor Centellas" or "Dr. Centellas"). Also, check your university email account regularly; I will use that address when sending important messages related to the course.

Student Disability Services. If you have a *documented* disability as described by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (P.L. 933-112 Section 504) or the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and would like to request academic and/or physical accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at 234 Martindale Center (662-915-7128). Course requirements will not be waived, but reasonable accommodations may be provided as appropriate. Please consult <http://www.olemiss.edu/depts/sds/> for more information on student disability services.

Academic Integrity & Plagiarism. All work submitted under *your* name is assumed to be *your* original work. The penalty for plagiarism and/or cheating in this class ranges from failure of the assignment to failing the course. Additional penalties are also possible. All students should familiarize themselves with the relevant guidelines and procedures in the *M Book*.

INST 381 COURSE SCHEDULE

	Date	Reading / Activity	Assignment Due
Week 1	8/27	Introduction; hand out syllabus	
	8/29	No class (APSA) *Baglione, Chapter 2	
Week 2	9/03	KW, Chapter 1	
	9/05	BL, Chapter 1 Gerring, Chapter 1	Preliminary research statement
Week 3	9/10	BL, Chapter 2	
	9/12	BL, Chapter 3 (IRB)	
Week 4	9/17	BL, Chapter 4 (Interviews & Surveys)	IRB approval forms
	9/19	BL, Chapter 6 (Ethnography)	
Week 5	9/24	BL, Chapter 8 (Archival Research)	
	9/26	BL, Chapter 11 (Content Analysis)	
Week 6	10/01	Brief research presentations	
	10/03	Brief research presentations	Qualitative analysis statement
Week 7	10/08	KW, Chapter 2-3	
	10/10	KW, Chapter 4	
Week 8	10/15	KW, Chapter 5 (Data Sources)	
	10/17	KW, Chapter 6	
Week 9	10/22	KW, Chapter 7	
	10/24	KW, Chapter 8	
Week 10	10/29	Brief research presentations	
	10/31	Brief research presentations	Quantitative analysis statement
Week 11	11/05	Gerring, Chapter 2-3	
	11/07	Gerring, Chapter 4	
Week 12	11/12	Gerring, Chapter 5	
	11/14	Gerring, Chapter 6	
Week 13	11/19	Gerring, Chapter 7	
	11/21	Gerring, Epilogue	Preliminary proposal due
		Thanksgiving Break	
Week 14	12/03	Brief research presentations	Peer reviews due
	12/05	Brief research presentations	Case selection statement
		Final Exam (Proposal presentations)	Final thesis proposal due